THE TEACHING OF LATIN WORD-ORDER

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PART I. CAESAR AND CICERO

In the mental processes of English-speaking people word-order is a grammatical fact of prime importance. The function of words is decided more often by their place and context than by their inflectional form. In accordance with a historical tendency, acting universally but most fully developed in English, most of the elaborate machinery of synthetic languages, required to indicate grammatical relationships, has been supplanted by the simple device of a definite word-order. Thus the English words "Caesar," "the Gauls," and "conquered" will without further modification make directly opposite statements as one noun or the other precedes the verb. To make these two different statements in Latin requires in each of the three words used a change in inflectional ending. Moreover, under the necessity of contributing to clearness what inflection formerly supplied, the English order has become most rigid. Not only do subject, verb, and object stand in an established sequence, but adjectives, the possessive case, participles, prepositional phrases, even subordinate clauses, obey set laws of arrangement. Sweet says: "Adverbs show almost the last remains of normal free order in English." The so-called loose order—an ill-chosen name—is not merely a rhetorical form; it is a firmly grounded syntactical device. It prevails overwhelmingly in daily speech, and in the written English of all young and untrained minds. Periodic structure has come to have an artificial aspect. We call it the *inverted* order.

In Latin, therefore, pupils encounter a language which not only uses the unfamiliar machinery of inflection, but also runs counter to the system of word-order which in their own speech is of fundamental significance. It groups words by different and less rigid laws, and prefers the periodic structure. The pupil in translating

must rebuild by the English system sentences erected on an entirely different plan. If the new structure which results from his sorting and readjusting have symmetry and effectiveness, it will vary from the original as widely as a modern dwelling differs from a Roman house. He must be familiar with the two contrasting theories of construction. The better he understands their differences, the more quickly and easily can he tear apart and reconstruct, and the better will the resources and beauties of each be appreciated.

Undoubtedly in the past too much emphasis has been laid on the tearing-apart, too little on the study of the architectural effects of the old. A natural reaction has followed. Professor Hale's able pamphlet on *The Art of Reading Latin* made many converts to the theory that pupils must be taught to master the words in their Latin order. As another writer puts it: "The words must be forced to make a mental picture to us in that order, whether it is familiar to us or not." The practical recipe is: Discover and hold in mind all the grammatical possibilities of each word in succession, until the sentence makes clear the right one. Unquestionably this is the mental attitude which we should strive to attain, but experiment quickly shows that this method requires an impossible feat from the average pupil. He is not able to grasp the long periodic sentences of Caesar and Cicero without much training of his mental powers. Herbert Spencer, in his *Philosophy of Style*, says:

> So long as the mind has not much to do, it may be well able to grasp all the preparatory clauses of a sentence and use them effectively, ... but if every faculty be strained in the endeavor to catch the speaker's or writer's drift, it may happen that the mind, unable to carry on both processes at once, will break down and allow the elements of thought to lapse into confusion.

But, while in practical application Professor Hale's method meets these difficulties, it is altogether right in emphasizing the significance of Latin order. It should be taught *per se*, not first for its rhetorical significance—that will come as a natural corollary—but for its grammatical value. Most books which take up the question of order lay too much stress at first on rhetorical effectiveness, which is not the first help needed in the struggle. Teach pupils that the Latin preference in plain narrative was for an order as simple as our own, and show them what that order is. At the same time, teach them to

group words in phrases and clauses; for nothing is more fatal than
to isolate them.   Pupils who profess themselves unable to read a
sentence because they do not remember the meaning of one word
in it, must learn that they are trying to translate on an altogether
false system.   It is absurd to take a word by itself and consider its
possibilities irrespective of its context.

Following out these two principles, it is both possible and profit-
able to teach certain principles of Latin order throughout the usual
college preparatory reading.   Those which my own experience has
proved useful are embodied in the following paragraphs.   Many
of the suggestions may be found scattered through various school
texts and grammars; some are taken from college editions, and I
have simply adapted them to the needs of younger classes; some I
have seen nowhere else in definite form.

It is one of the merits of Caesar's *Commentaries* as a text for
beginners that his style varies so little.   The same molds are con-
stantly used.   It has been estimated that the verb is the last word
in 75 per cent. of his sentences.   Different as the word-order is
from that of English, it is regulated by easily recognized principles.
The most obvious one, above referred to, that the verb closes the
sentence, and that therefore its object or other modifiers precede it,
should have been fully mastered in the simple sentences of the first
year's study.   It has not been adequately developed with most
second-year pupils in regard to the verb position in subordinate
clauses.   They will pick out a word at random from the dependent
clause, and try to fit it into the main statement.   They do not recog-
nize that the conjunction at one end and the verb at the other set
off a compact group, to be handled by itself.   This definiteness,
this marshaling of forces, this *testudo* under which the words advance,
are expressive of the very genius of the Roman mind.   It affords
also an obvious means of emphasis.   The pupil least quick to dis-
criminate can see the force of such a variation as *quod aliud iter
haberent nullum,* and how effectively *Caesari cum id nuntiatum esset*
heralds the arrival on the scene of the man who was to dominate
it.   The puzzling order of B. G. ii. 6 need not be meaningless.   *Post
eum quae erant; commeatus ut . . . . portari possent,* give the
defense of the rear and easy access to supplies their due importance

in locating the camp. It is excellent practice to have the subordinate clauses picked out purely by their form, before translating a word. The Roman order greatly simplifies the analysis of sentences. Pupils should turn back to the study of English with a firmer grasp of the complex sentence.

The participial group most easily understood is the ablative absolute. Well may the beginner recognize it with pleasure, for its function is clearly defined and varies comparatively little. If the grammatical meaning of the word "absolute" is taught, the practical rule for its use can be readily deduced. The phrases stand by themselves, unrelated, and when they obscure the main thought, they can be set aside, to be as loosely attached later to the English as they are to the Latin sentence, and as easily inserted at almost any point. Their internal order may vary. The first three examples of the construction in the second book of the *Bellum Gallicum—omni pacata Gallia, re frumentaria comparata,* and *omni Gallia vexata—*have (1) adjective, participle, noun; (2) noun, adjective, participle; (3) adjective, noun, participle.

The ablative absolute supplies a most effective way of multiplying details. The famous sentence of *B. G.* ii. 25, with its nine ablative absolutes, gives just the desired picture of the confusion and demoralization out of which Caesar brought order by his meteoric appearance on the battlefield.

No less important is the use of other participial phrases in Caesar. Following the periodic rule that the verb comes after its modifiers, the participles indicate the structure of the sentence as sharply as does the internal arrangement of subordinate clauses. A participle in the nominative or accusative is a signal that the end of a phrase which modifies subject or object is reached. But each participial phrase, unlike most ablative absolutes, must be recast in English in an order the reverse of that in which it stands. One of the commonest of Caesar's patterns has the subject heading the sentence (*a*), a direct object or some adverbial modifier (*b*), the participle agreeing with the subject and governing the other factors which have preceded it (*c*), the object of the main verb or its modifiers (*d*), the verb itself (*e*). The same grammatical elements in English would run *acbed*. For example, *Helvetii* (*a*) *omnium*

rerum inopia (*b*) *deducti* (*c*) *legatos ad eum* (*d*) *miserunt* (*e*) becomes
in English, "the Helvetians (*a*), induced (*c*) by the lack of all resources
(*b*), sent (*e*) envoys to him (*d*). Often the subject is omitted, and
the first intimation of it is found in the gender and number of the
participle. *Eos impeditos et inopinantes aggressus, magnam partem
eorum concidit.* Of these participial phrases, each one to be done
into English by reversing its order, there are twenty-five examples
in the first twenty chapters of the second book of the *Bellum Galli-
cum.* When a pupil consciously recognizes this common usage of
Caesar, he has a key to many of the longest and most involved sen-
tences. To give only one instance, by taking out the ablative abso-
lutes and making each participle in the nominative in this sentence
from *B. G.* i. 10 a halting-place, and going back from it to readjust
the context to the English order, even a beginner will find it a com-
paratively simple problem.

Helvetii | ea spe deiecti | navibus iunctis ratibusque compluribus factis |
alii vadis Rhodani (qua minima altitudo erat) nonnumquam interdiu, saepius
noctu si perrumpere possent conati | operis munitione et telis repulsi | hoc
conatu destiterunt.

There are a few other variations from English usage which need
to be emphasized in teaching Caesar. It is both necessary and
easy to become accustomed to prepositional phrases in the order:
adjective, preposition, noun, as in *quo in loco, magno cum strepitu,*
and such phrases as *qui cum,* where the Latin relative connects
sentences in a way impossible in English. The effect of asyndeton
will be better understood later on if this usage is known. Second-
year pupils should also learn to readjust sentences where the common
subject of the principal and subordinate clauses stands by itself,
but in English is most naturally incorporated in the first clause
given. The position of the partitive genitive, of *causa,* and of *fere*
should also be mastered before Caesar is finished.

It is good practice to have the Latin words re-read occasionally
in the English order, and to have the text, after it has been translated,
read aloud with attention to the grouping of words, impossible
before the passage has been correctly interpreted. A review read
in this way is often more valuable than if translated. Pupils, more-
over, should be helped first to an understanding of order. Con-

struction and the meaning of words should follow rather than precede this in their mental processes. They should never be told the meaning of a word until they have discovered for themselves some clue to the use to be made of it.

With the first paragraph of Cicero the change of style is evident. The sudden provocation, the strong emotion of the first Catilinarian oration, result in short, forceful sentences and greater variety of order. The verb is often shifted from the end of the sentence, the emphatic word crowds the subject from its position. *Caedem te optimatium tulisse*—"Slaughter (as well as rebellion) you have planned." *Luce sunt clariora nobis tua consilia omnia*—"Light itself is not clearer than your plans, to the last one of them." But in the main the principles of sequence are the same. The verb at the end of the subordinate clause defines its limits sharply. In *Cat.* ii. 8 this produces a series of relatives: { *Quem [quia (quod semper volui) murus interest] non timeo* }, which, like an algebraic equation, can be simplified by removing the parentheses. The occasional variations are made chiefly for the sake of emphasis. Of the participial phrases there are ten examples in the first three chapters of the first oration against Catiline, and the order is the reverse of the English, the participle following its complement, except in two phrases where there is a chiasmus with another similar phrase directly following. As the present participle occurs more often in Cicero than in Caesar, the contrast with the position of the English participle may need to be emphasized again. The rule will clear up at once many troublesome phrases, such as, *Invidiam virtute partam gloriam non invidiam putarem.*

It may be learned also from the first Catilinarian oration that the possessive pronoun preceding its noun has the force of *ipsius* or *ipsorum*, as in the phrases, *in nostro numero, patres conscripti,* "in our own number;" *me in meo lectulo,* "in my own bed these murderers would have slain me." The same force is given by the unusual place of the possessive in *Si te parentes timerent et odissent tui.*

The Roman preference for juxtaposition of the demonstrative and relative is in striking contrast with our usage. Caesar wrote, *de ea quam habeat gratia;* Cicero, *eorum hominum qui hoc idem*

sentiunt mentibus, and, extending the principle further, *de nostro qui remansissemus numero.* Of modifiers embodied in a phrase, such as *infestis omnium oculis* and *complures eiusdem amentiae scelerisque socios*, there are frequent instances, but this simple grouping has, especially in the case of the possessive genitive, close enough analogies in our own language to be readily underst ood.

The finished literary style of Cicero is best studied in the *Pro Archia.* From the elaborate chiasmus of the first paragraph, *respicere spatium praeteriti temporis et pueritiae memoriam recordari*, to the inverted order of relative and demonstrative in the artificially simple close, it bears the marks of careful workmanship. Such phrases as *hoc uti genere, ad communem adferre lucem*, the interlocked order of *huic summa ingeni praedito gloria*, the avoidance of a succession of like final syllables in *Hoc maximum et periculorum incitamentum est et laborum*, all show the literary artist using skilfully the peculiar resources of his own language. Moreover, before leaving the study of Cicero some comprehension should be gained of the Roman love of distinctness which leads to the emphatic position of the subject and of general negatives, etc.; some appreciation of the unity gained by adherence to one subject; of the logical sequence of subordinate clauses; and of the manifold resources of the Latin period. In other words, pupils should have mastered the word-order sufficiently to have eyes for rhetorical as well as grammatical effects.